

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating him on his many years of public service. I know his wife, his family and many friends join with me in praising his accomplishments and extending thanks for his service over the years to Baldwin County.

INTRODUCING THE MINORITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION PILOT PROGRAM OF 2006

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the Minority Entrepreneurship & Innovation Pilot Program of 2006, a bill that I am introducing as a companion to S. 2586, sponsored by Senator John Kerry. This bill is designed to address our nation's growing economic disparities through the promotion of business development and entrepreneurship in minority communities.

Economic indicators show that today, the average income for African Americans is just 62 percent that of whites. More than 40 years after the last of the Jim Crow laws was repealed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the economic value of blacks is still nearly three-fifths that of whites—a statistic that clearly indicates that the vestiges of slavery are enduring.

This race-based "wealth gap" is simply unacceptable. And African Americans are not the only minority group suffering from this disparity. The average incomes of Native Americans and Latinos are similarly unbalanced, with those communities earning 65 and 74 percent of the income of whites respectively.

But the news is not all bad. The National Urban League, in its 2006 "State of Black America Report," indicated that there may be a silver lining to this cloud. The prevalence of black-owned businesses has been on the upswing, revealing a difference of 2.5 to 1 (White Businesses to African-American Businesses), as compared with 3 to 1 a few years ago.

As many of my colleagues know, minority-owned businesses provide real opportunity for individuals, families and communities. By supporting their growth, we can begin to reverse the increasing "wealth gap" for good, leading to greater economic independence for minorities. This result will multiply itself and in the process lay the foundation for closing other socio-economic gaps—gaps that have created an environment for persistent economic failure in many of these communities.

That is why I am introducing the Minority Entrepreneurship and Innovation Pilot Program of 2006. This legislation would establish a \$24 million, two-year pilot program to promote small business development in colleges and universities that serve African American, Native American and Latino communities.

Through \$1 million grants, the institutions would provide students in highly-skilled fields such as engineering, manufacturing and science with the tools they need to start their own businesses. The bill would also allow institutions to establish Small Business Development Centers to provide counseling, capacity building and niche market development services.

A great legacy of the American Dream has been the opportunity for ordinary citizens to improve their livelihoods by starting their own business. The Minority Entrepreneurship and Innovation Pilot Program of 2006 would give minority communities a chance to share in this attainable dream.

I want to thank the original cosponsors who have joined with me in introducing this important bill, Representatives BENNIE THOMPSON, GRACE NAPOLITANO, SANFORD BISHOP, ALBERT WYNN, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, BOBBY SCOTT, MAJOR OWENS, BENJAMIN CARDIN, AL GREEN, GREGORY MEEKS, BOBBY RUSH, JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD, RAUL GRIJALVA, JOHN CONYERS, G.K. BUTTERFIELD, ALLEN BOYD, MIKE ROSS, DANNY DAVIS, STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, LINDA SÁNCHEZ, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, CAROLYN KILPATRICK, JOE BACA, DAVID SCOTT, ALBERT WYNN, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, HILDA SOLIS, DONALD PAYNE, BARBARA LEE, C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER, SAM FARR and JAMES CLYBURN.

I ask the rest of my colleagues to please join us in helping to reverse the "wealth gap" by supporting this legislation.

IN SUPPORT OF A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THE FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS OF KOSOVO

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in many years, two high-ranking delegations—one representing Serbia, the other the Serbian province of Kosovo—met in Vienna, Austria to discuss the future political status of Kosovo, which has been administered by the United Nations since 1999. The Vienna meeting was the first time that the Serbian President and Prime Minister met with their political counterparts from Kosovo.

Both sides presented and explained their position on Kosovo's future political status. The Serbian delegation presented a practical plan for the highest possible autonomy for Kosovo inside Serbia's borders, while Kosovo's leaders presented their plan for independence.

Although the parties reached no agreement, the Vienna meeting was very positive, and I believe it should be commended. It allowed both sides to present their platforms in a constructive and diplomatic manner, and provided the international community with strong assurances that events in the Balkans can be solved in a peaceful and civilized way.

Serbia proved once again that is ready to seek a final solution for Kosovo based on the tenets of territorial integrity, international law and regional stability. Serbia's position highlighted the necessity to broker a final agreement that will keep democracy and reform in Serbia intact.

An imposed solution for Kosovo would be a dangerous precedent and may serve as the fatal blow for the economic and political processes in Serbia. There is a slim but very real possibility that radical elements in Serbian politics would seize power in Belgrade if Kosovo is granted independence from the UN, without ironclad-guarantees for Kosovo's Serb popu-

lation and the firm commitment to protect Serbian historical, cultural and religious sites in Kosovo.

Serbia is a new country with new leadership. It is a country led by reformers, like President Boris Tadic, who helped topple Slobodan Milosevic from power and had the fortitude to transfer him to the Hague Tribunal to answer for his crimes against humanity.

This new Serbia is a thriving, free market democracy, based on transparency, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Serbia is a member of international organizations, and it is on the path toward membership in the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Serbia of today is working with the United States to spread democracy and freedom and now the United States has the unique opportunity to stand with its democratic allies in Serbia, and to work to advance a mutually acceptable solution to the future political status of Kosovo; one which won't leave Serbia and its fragile democracy in tatters.

The mishandling of Kosovo's final political status might reverse these advances in Serbia and endanger a region just recovering from dictatorship, ethnic strife, isolation and war.

RECOGNIZING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF WELFARE REFORM

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 10th anniversary of President Clinton's historic welfare reform initiative. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 fundamentally transformed our nation's welfare system and provided a clear direction for the future of this important program.

I am proud to have played an active role in the passage of this legislation during my time in the White House. If it were not for President Clinton's vision, welfare reform would never have gained the bipartisan support that was required. President Clinton vowed to end welfare as we know it and he succeeded in forming a system that both rewarded and required work.

In Illinois alone, 217,000 families worked their way off of TANF and into the workforce. President Clinton realized that the best job training was an actual job.

We also realized that jobs came along with new challenges for welfare recipients. Therefore we assisted recipients in finding child care and instituted transitional medical assistance for families leaving the welfare rolls.

The greatest accomplishment of welfare reform was connecting a generation of children with a culture of work. Many children who would have grown up in a household with non-working parents, have internalized the value of work and learned how to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Thanks to welfare reform, more than 3 million children rose above the poverty line between 1996 and 2000. Earnings of the poorest people in our country rose significantly.

However, some of the progress we made has been reversed. Between 2001 and 2005, 5 million Americans fell below the poverty line, including 1.5 million children.